

# County of Fresno

## Solid Waste Quarterly

### HOLIDAY WASTE PREVENTION GUIDE

#### Trim Your Holiday “Wasteline”

Every year between Thanksgiving and New Year’s, the average California household will generate between three and ten extra bags of trash. All the holiday wrapping, gift boxes and packaging, party goods, and seasonal leftovers will add an estimated 100 million bags of trash to California’s landfills. You can help reduce waste and have an environmentally friendly holiday season by following some of the ideas in this special holiday edition newsletter.



#### The Gifts

- ❖ Buy gifts that will help reduce waste all year long: Reusable lunch and shopping bags are great choices; a durable razor will keep disposable razors out of the landfill; a fountain pen can replace ballpoint pens that end up in the trash.
- ❖ Look for toys, books, and other products made from recycled materials.
- ❖ Shop for gifts at antique stores, estate sales, or flea markets. Remember, one person’s trash is another’s treasure!
- ❖ Set a good example by giving homemade goodies or something you’ve made yourself from reused items.
- ❖ Consider gifts in-kind such as a dinner out, tickets to a play or sports event, or lottery tickets.
- ❖ For kids, start a savings account or give stocks or bonds.
- ❖ Try giving gift certificates if you don’t know what someone wants, or simply make a donation in his or her name to a favorite charity.

#### The Wrap

- ❖ Instead of traditional wrap, place gifts in interesting boxes and tins found at flea markets, garage sales and thrift stores.
- ❖ Decide to make the packaging part of the gift—a piece of jewelry wrapped in a silk



scarf, garden tools in a planter or bucket, a kitchen gift wrapped in a dish towel.

- ❖ Be creative and use a brown paper bag to design your own gift wrap. Decorate with marking pens, crayons, or ink stamp art.
- ❖ Cut up an old satin bathrobe and use the pieces to wrap small packages or as a tissue paper replacement.
- ❖ Instead of wrapping gifts for kids, hide the presents, plant clues to where they’re hidden, and turn the search into a treasure hunt.

#### The Decorations

- ❖ If you have a holiday tree, purchase a living tree. Plant it in the yard after the holidays and enjoy watching it grow year after year. Better yet, donate it to a school, church, hospital or non-profit organization. (Check with your accountant. Your gift might qualify as a tax deduction!)
- ❖ Buy decorations for the tree that you can use from year to year. Instead of tinsel, try glass icicles. Popcorn and cranberries make beautiful garlands. (Put the popcorn and cranberries in the yard after the holidays as a gift to the birds.)
- ❖ Painted acorns, pine cones, nuts, flowers, and other natural materials make great ornaments. This is a good art project for the kids.



#### The Party

- ❖ Turn down the heat before the guests arrive. You’ll save energy while the extra body heat of your guests will warm up the room.
- ❖ For formal affairs, consider renting seldom worn party clothes or buying them from consignment shops.
- ❖ You can also rent dishes and glassware, making your party more elegant and eliminating the need to buy special holiday china.
- ❖ Walk to neighborhood parties or carpool with friends (with a designated driver!) if it’s too far to walk.
- ❖ Buy food in bulk or in concentrate. Look for

fresh products sold without excess packaging and products in refillable or reusable containers.

- ❖ Set up recycling bins and label containers for reusable plates and utensils, bottles, and cans.
- ❖ Plan a menu with lots of finger foods. This minimizes the need for plates and utensils.
- ❖ Don't throw away leftovers! Put them in plastic containers or bags and send them home with guests, or donate to food banks.
- ❖ Plan meals wisely and practice portion control to minimize waste in the first place. A 12 to 14 pound turkey will feed up to ten people.



For all the trimmings, follow the guide below:

Food/Drink	Portion Per Person
Eggnog	½ cup
Stuffing	¼ pound
Sweet Potato Casserole	¼ pound
Green Beans	¼ pound
Cranberry Relish	3 tablespoons
Pumpkin Pie	1/8 of a 9" pie

## BYOB

- ❖ When you're out shopping for gifts and holiday supplies, *bring your own bag*—plastic or cloth would be fine.
- ❖ Have the clerk place your purchases directly into your bag. By consolidating your purchases, you avoid taking a bag from the store, and one bag is much easier to carry.

## When It's All Over . . .

- ❖ If you purchased a cut tree rather than a living tree, recycle it. Call your local trash hauler for details on how to recycle your tree.
- ❖ Save boxes and packing materials for mailing all year long.

- ❖ After opening gifts, put discarded boxes, name tags, and wrapping paper in gift boxes and store for next year.
- ❖ Put your holiday tree in your compost pile. Don't have a compost pile? Call the Resources Division office, at 262-4259, for information on how to get started.
- ❖ If any of your gifts are a replacement item, such as a bike, luggage, or a coat, don't throw the old one in the trash. Consider donating it to a thrift store
- ❖ Save your holiday cards to make gift tags for next year.
- ❖ If you received lots of unwanted catalogs, call the company's 800 number and cancel them.

## The Resolution

- ❖ Take stock of everything you've purchased and everything you've thrown away this year. Draw up a list of ways you can make next year's holidays even less wasteful.
- ❖ Make a New Year's resolution to trim waste all year long.

## We Can Help

The Resources Division can assist you with more ideas on waste reduction and prevention. For recycling information, we offer free copies of "Turning It Around," a directory of recyclers throughout Fresno County. Please call the Resources Division office, at 262-4259, for assistance.

***HAVE A JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.***

(Portions of information contained in this newsletter were adapted from the Use Less Stuff Report's, "42 Ways to Trim your Holiday Wasteline.")

*The "Solid Waste Quarterly" is produced by the County of Fresno Planning & Resource Management Department, Resources Division, to provide information about issues related to AB 939, the Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989.*